

ARMY RECRUITING CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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As the United States moves into the 21st Century, we must be cognizant of our ability to influence today's youth into volunteering to serve in our military. Significant events have occurred, and their impact will continue that will influence the direction our nation will follow in the future. The American military will face significant challenges in the years to come, as it strives to maintain its worldwide military supremacy. This paper will look beyond the superficial crust of basic training cultures and combat operations as leading causes of reduced military interest and focus on recruiting techniques, the current societies "mannerisms" that influence the military's target audience, and the target audience for the military. The research highlights some significant disconnects related to how the military looks at potential applicants for service to our nation. It also reveals that military families can be viewed as the center of gravity for the military and exert tremendous influence on military members decision to remain in the service. Research recommendations address the above issues, but also assess the potential for reducing the military recruiting bureaucracy by combining limited resources through a concept of Joint Armed Forces Recruiting.

ARMY RECRUITING CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As I begin this research on the challenges and potential difficulties in recruiting for the United States Armed Services in the 21st century, I must recall a quote from Mao Tse-tung:

There are those who say, "I am a farmer" or "I am a student," "I can discuss literature but not the military arts." This is incorrect. There is no profound difference between the farmer and the soldier. You must have courage. You simply leave your farms and become soldiers... When you take your arms in hand, you become soldiers; when you are organized, you become military units.¹

With Mao Tse-tung's quote as the backdrop, why is the strongest nation in the world currently struggling to encourage young men and women to join the ranks of an admirable profession? Simply put, how can the United States acquire and maintain the necessary number of personnel to meet the present and future requirements for our Army?

Ultimately, the Army must adapt and overcome its archaic methods of communicating with future generations in order to maintain the Army's superiority now, and in the future. The Army's center of gravity is its people; past, present, and future. It is the Soldier and leaders that currently make the United States Army the most advanced Army in the world. With all that said however, we are in jeopardy of losing the world leadership position, as we struggle to achieve our yearly accession goal in order to maintain the above proficiencies.

Recruiting is not a new problem for our Army. Army recruiting was initiated in 1775 to fill the ranks of the "Continental" during the Revolutionary War. In 1822, the Army opened its first recruiting stations in York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Since then, the Army has increased the number of recruiting stations, for active and reserve

recruiters, to more than 1,480 in the continental United States and its territories. Volunteerism has been, and will continue to be, the backbone of the Army, even during times of conflict. During its 233 year history, the draft has only been in effect for approximately 35 years, mainly during times of war, and for a period of 20 years following the conflict in Korea. The only time conscription completely replaced volunteerism was during the latter part of World War II.²

The first several years of the all volunteer Army saw positive trends with maintaining end strengths. This was partially due to the down sizing of the military and the rapid withdrawal of forces from Vietnam. By the late 1970s, all services, particularly the Army, were having difficulty achieving their annual accession missions. The Department of Defense, with the backing of Congress, eventually passed several resolutions that would make the military more attractive to potential recruits. In rapid succession, Congress approved substantial military pay increases, offered new recruits financing for education, and provided the armed services an increased budget for recruitment advertising. By 1986, the Army was finally meeting its annual requirements with quality recruits. Since 1986, however, the country has faced new and constantly changing personnel requirements based upon changing threats, the changing society, changing technology, and constantly changing visions of future needs.

The United States Army continues to face a potential crisis in filling its military ranks since the acceptance of an All-Volunteer Army shaped by the Gates Commission Report. Since the last man was drafted in December 1972 and reported for training in June 1973,³ senior military leaders have pondered methods to maintain fluctuating

annual strength levels. The primary question boils down to, “how do we consistently attract today’s qualified youth to serve their country, in peace time and in war?”

Although the Army’s mission has diversified since the termination of the draft, the primary function of the Army remains to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic. Since the last man was drafted, the Army has recruited more than two million young Americans. Today, it is facing a most difficult recruiting environment, due in large measure to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Generation “Y” beliefs, philosophy of life, and increased competition with civilian business provide equal, if not greater potential benefits for upward mobility for the individual. It is unlikely that the Army will overcome these multiple challenges with the current recruiting system. Over the past 30 years, the Department of Defense and Congress have identified and recommended numerous courses of action to consolidate or eliminate layers of recruiter bureaucracy, but like most “entrenched” organizations, the services were unwilling to change. Given the weight of all the additional challenges facing the armed services, on top of the normal daily challenges recruiters routinely face, it is time to revisit Army recruiting and make it more relevant in the 21st Century.

Military recruiting is one of the most challenging human resources staffing operations. A major concern in the 21st century is that the propensity of adults desiring to join the military is slowing, as shown by the annual Youth Attitude Tracking Survey⁴. The current situation reflects a 15-year decline in the overall level of youth interest in military service; obviously a significant factor affecting the success of military recruiting.⁵ Compounding the challenge, the military must not only recruit large scale numbers

annually, but also meet or exceed high entry level standards for age, mental capacity, as well as physical and moral standards that many civilian organizations do not require.

With dwindling interest and high standards, it is no mean task for a recruiter to actually obtain a successful enlistment contract. The current recruiting process involves numerous methods to contact and ultimately contract, potential recruits that include: local and national advertising, informational visits to schools and social groups, traveling military exhibits, direct mail advertising, telephone solicitation, web sites, and contacts and visitations. On average, an Army recruiter must make 120 contacts with specific individuals of which approximately 17 will schedule appointments to meet a recruiter. From those 17 scheduled appointments only ten will be conducted. From those ten, approximately 2.3 will take the enlistment/skills assessment test (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery [ASVAB]) of which only 1.5 will pass. Out of the 120 initial contacts, a recruiter can generally only expect one new recruit to actually enter the Army.⁶

It is obvious that the amount of effort to acquire a single Soldier is not desirable. The next question to address is “what has led to this situation in the few years since 1986?” The answer is complex, multifaceted, and involves changes in societal norms, demographics, and fluctuating global changes and crises. Before exploring potential options to meet these problems, an understanding of the environment that the Army recruiter operates in must be examined.

Although the Army met its accession mission in fiscal year 2007, there are several significant factors that will affect the Army’s ability to meet its annual mission in the future. The current environment for military recruiting is difficult since numerous

alternatives are more attractive to today's youth. As identified in a recent interview with MG Thomas P. Bostick, Commander of the Army Recruiting Command, the environment is getting tougher. Two decades ago, about 25 percent of young adults, 17-24 years old, would potentially serve in the military. Today only about 15.7 percent would serve in the military. A similar reduction in interest has emerged for recruit influencers, but the timelines are even shorter. Today only about 25 percent of mothers and 33 percent of fathers would recommend military service, whereas in 2004, approximately 40 percent of mothers and 50 percent of fathers were inclined to support military service for the young adults in their lives.⁷ The loss of interest among potential recruits and their influencers comes at a time when the Army already struggles to fill increased requirements of a transforming military that will eventually grow by a minimum of 65,000 active-duty Soldiers in the next couple of years.

The loss of interest is reflected in other alarming data. Although the Army met 101 percent of 2007 recruiting goals in both active Army and Army reserve, it failed to meet its accession quality goal, achieving only 95 percent. The National Priorities Project, a research group that analyzes federal data, found that nearly 71 percent of Army recruits brought in during 2007 had graduated from high school. This is the lowest proportion of high school graduates enlisting in 25 years, and the continuation of a downward trend that began shortly after the start of the Iraq war.⁸ The Army's goal of 90 percent high school graduates has not been met since 2005 and has steadily declined each year since.

Let's look into the current population that the Army must draw from, now and in the near future, in order to maintain its annual end strength requirements. The Army is

currently recruiting from primarily Generation Y, or as some may call it, Generation X on steroids. Although the principle source or focus of recruitment is not Generation X, that population does not serve as a communication bridge to Generation Y or the previous generations of current policy makers. Generation X is the first generation to have spent their entire lives surrounded by technology which has created significant personality differences. This personality difference is one reason why “cultural clashes” are occurring between Generation X and previous generations. As the baby boomer generation prepares to retire, by the end of the decade, the demand for Generation “Yers” services will greatly exceed the supply, putting this generation in a strong position to dictate terms to their prospective employers.

Other physical and psychological cultural differences are readily apparent. More than a third of this up and coming generation’s population has tattoos and body piercing somewhere besides their earlobe. But those are considered stylish, not rebellious.⁹ Many believe that Generation Y will become identified with cynicism, skepticism and pessimism in comparison to past generations.¹⁰ Of significant concern, according to a January 2006 newsletter produced by the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives is that, “anti-depressants, prescription medication and other behavior altering drugs, such as Ritalin, makes Generation Yers the most medicated generation in history.” Generation Yers, although ambitious, are also demanding and generally loyal to families, friends, their communities and themselves before their employers. According to a study by Families and Work Institute, this generation is less likely to be obsessed with work, and is more interested in pursuing a high and perceived “selfish” quality of life. As Bruce Tulgan, the founder of leading generational-research

firm Rainmaker Thinking stated, “This is the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world.” This generation is also the first to be “overwhelmed” from various media outlets in this technology-rich environment, potentially making it more racially and culturally tolerant than the past.

Generation Yers mentality is that they often need an entire team – and a couple of cheerleaders – to do anything. For some of them, the concept “work ethic” needs rethinking. Tamara Erickson, co-author of the 2006 book, “Workforce Crisis,” uses an excellent example of Generation Yers mentality. During a conversation with the CFO of a large company in New York, he stated, “I can’t find anyone to hire who’s willing to work 60 hours a week. Can you talk to them?” She replied, “Why don’t I start by talking to you? What they’re really telling you is that they’re sorry it takes you so long to get your work done.”

Generation Y’s problems can be partially attributed to their baby-boomer parents, who rebelled against their parents and coddled the Yers to a state of dependency. Current sociological indicators appear to reinforce this issue of dependency simply replacing the parent with the Federal Government. Coddling has led to many Generation Yers not understanding the struggle and sacrifice of leaving the “nest,” therefore we see a high percentage of young adults still residing with their parents. With this level of parental involvement, it’s a miracle that Generation Yers can do anything on their own. “It’s difficult to start making decisions when you haven’t been making decisions your whole life,” says Mitchell Marks, an organizational psychologist and president of consulting firm Joining Forces.¹¹

The fact that Generation Y is not willing to work is a myth. What they are looking for is job satisfaction, along with technological challenges so they maintain currency in the civilian market. Today's generation switches jobs, over the course of their careers, much more frequently than generations before them. Generation Yers view the working as a job, and not necessarily a career. If the job is not challenging or rewarding enough they will not stick around. But, generation Yers respond most of all to money and it is not unusual for them to "bail" from one company to another for a higher salary. In order for organizations to get noticed, they must have a "vision". They are not impressed by mission statements, but they are looking for attributes that indicate shared values: affinity groups, flat hierarchies, divestment from the more notorious dictatorial regimes. The Army can take advantage of these traits with skill development and job satisfaction along with retirement benefits.

The senior leadership of the Department of Defense must take heed of Generation Yers psychological and social characteristics. Current recruiting processes and procedures to induct recruits, into the military, will fail to maintain a professional Army over the next several years, if we do not modify our current rules and regulations to focus on enticing this or future generation.

Considering the problem, and the current manpower pool, what is the Army doing, and perhaps more significantly, what needs to be done to rectify the problem in both the short term and the longer term? Perhaps the first step is to recognize what works and what does not.

It appears that the Army struggles to meet annual recruiting requirements it is simultaneously creating hostility in the civilian market. Programs like the Joint

Advertising and Market Research Recruiting Database, which collects personal data on 16- to 18-year-olds have created animosity among civilian watch groups, who are concerned about privacy issues. The program is very similar to the Total Information Awareness (TIA) program that was terminated after Congress cancelled funding due to privacy issues.¹² The other long-standing political lightning rod issue is the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. As an institution, the military has generally been the lead agency in changing cultural behaviors, such as, racial integration and equal rights. It might be time to focus on the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, especially since numerous senior retired military members now are speaking out on the disadvantages of this current policy.¹³

In the short term, probably the easiest way to entice potential recruits is by “throwing money” at the problem. The Army has steadily increased enlistment bonuses over the past couple of years to entice prospective applicants. This approach may be especially critical, since senior leaders have said that the Army on pace to complete the 65,000 Soldier build-up two years early. Among the most lucrative enlistment offers is the \$20,000 “quick-ship” bonus for applicants who report to basic training within 30 days of signing their military contract. Other incentives include the traditional Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) and numerous options for selective schools and stations of choice. Recent studies show that home and business ownership is extremely appealing to Generation Yers. In response, the Army is currently running a pilot program in five locations that offers recruits a down payment for home ownership or “seed” money to start their own business.¹⁴ The Army Advantage Fund offers recruits up to \$40,000 for a five-year enlistment for regular Army and up to \$20,000 for Army reservists. Retention plays another major part in maintaining readiness through strength. The Army has financially

responded to keep mid-level officers and enlisted Soldiers by offering bonuses of up to \$35,000 to stay. All these incentives are supposed to provide additional tools needed to continue effectively recruit and retain the Army. It will be essential to maintain these and other incentive packages to remain competitive with the civilian alternatives in today's world.

In 2005, when the Army failed to achieve its goal of 80,000 new Soldiers by nearly 10 percent, the Army immediately increased its bonuses, increased recruiters in the field, and initiated steps to alter enlistment requirements. Some of the first steps were to raise the maximum enlistment age, accept more high school equivalency diplomas (GED) vice graduation diplomas, and accept more applicants with minor criminal records. These changes allowed the Army to reach its goals over the following two years in quantity and not quality. The really big news inside these changes was the "lowering" of quality standards.

The Army also recently decided twice within six months to increase the maximum enlistment age for new recruits, from 35 to 40, and then to 42. Congress authorized all services to raise the maximum age for recruits from 35 to 42 in the fiscal 2006 defense budget authorization. The Army is the only service to take advantage of the age extension since it has been struggling with recruiting with the ongoing deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the Army is not expecting the age increase to provide a "flood" of 42 year old volunteers, it has provided over 1,000 new Soldiers into the ranks of the active Army and Reserves. Of interest, is that the maximum age to enlist in the Air Force and Marine Corps remains 27, with some minor exceptions, while the Navy's maximum age is 35.¹⁵

The National Priorities Project stated that the percent of “high-quality” recruits – those with a high school diploma who scored in the top half on the military’s qualification test – declined from 2004 to 2007. In that period, the number of high-quality recruits fell from about 61 percent to nearly 45 percent.¹⁶ According to a spokesman for the Army Recruiting Command, the Army has been willing to accept more recruits with general equivalency diplomas (GED) as the national high school graduation rates have fallen. In some cases, the Army has paid for recruits to obtain equivalency degrees or GEDs. The National Priorities Project also found that in 2007, upper-middle and high-income neighborhoods were underrepresented by an even larger margin than three years earlier.

The other significant trend, precipitated by the growing requirements of the Army transformation is the increased number of criminal waivers that are being approved by the Army in order to meet accessions. When the Army announced that it met its recruiting goal for October 2007, the first month in a five-year plan to add 65,000 new Soldiers to the ranks by 2012, Pentagon statistics show the Army met the goal by accepting a higher percentage of enlistees with criminal records, drug or alcohol problems, or health conditions that would have ordinarily disqualified them from service.¹⁷ The October data further shows that at least one of every five recruits required a waiver to join the service, leading military analysts to conclude that the Army has lowered its standards. According to Army data, of the 6,434 enlistees who signed up in October, 792 or 12.3 percent, required waivers for past criminal activity. These waivers included misdemeanor and felony convictions that would have otherwise disqualified them for service in the Army.¹⁸ Currently about 15 percent of new recruits

require moral waivers in order to qualify for service. Roughly 87 percent of approved waivers are for misdemeanor convictions, and the remainder for more serious offenses.¹⁹

The declining quality numbers are getting lots of attention, to include inside Congress. Senator Carl Levin, the influential Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, noted that he is concerned that the Army is sacrificing quality for quantity.²⁰ Achieving quality over quantity is easily said, but not to accomplish, particularly as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) in Iraq and Afghanistan continues with no end in sight or on the horizon. SGM Broussard, the Houston Recruiting Battalion senior Non-Commissioned Officer, recently countered the quality critics as follows, “quality goes beyond high school diplomas and aptitude scores, recruiting is a screening process but cannot measure the heart it takes to be a Soldier. Ultimately, the Army continues to offer unparalleled training, opportunities and life experiences that can help prepare young citizens for future success.”

Longer term incentives that are being used and/or investigated include an acceptance of demographic changes in the United States, programs designed to appeal to the electronic communications used by a younger generation, cooperation with the private job market, and Soldier “Quality of Life”. In addition, programs have been initiated to strengthen relations between the Active Army, Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve.

One method of easing accession goals is to expedite immigrants to becoming U.S. citizens through serving in the military. President George W. Bush signed an executive order, in July 2002, allowing immigrants with green cards to become United

States citizens as soon as they are sworn in to the military. The U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services said in a statement that, since 2002, more than 25,000 immigrant members of the armed services have become U.S. citizens and another 40,000 are eligible to request naturalization.²¹ According to U.S. Army Recruiting Command, money for education, wanting to serve the country, and to learn a skill are the top three motivators for immigrants to join the Army, not a fast track to citizenship. Many immigrants, however, believe that the Bush administration law may provide the right motivation for more immigrants to join the armed forces.

An example of the services attempting to get connected with today's youth is the development of the Marketing Enhanced Recruiting Station (MERS). This concept enables today's youth to access military websites and other "hi-tech" features. The overall intention is to entice the military market to enter the facility and to expose them to the positive aspects of military service.²² Although a good concept, the technology advances in today's world quickly surpassed the hi-tech capabilities at the MERS. These methods attempt to stay "plugged-in" to today's youth market but are struggling to stay abreast of the civilian information market as globalization continues to streamline the information technologies and capabilities.

A positive program that the Army developed in 2000, and is still in use, is the Partnership for Youth Success program (PaYS). This program guarantees a job interview with a civilian employer they chose from a list of participating member companies as part of their enrollment in the program upon completion of their active duty or Initial Entry Training for the Army Reserve. Since 2000, more than 53,000 Soldiers have successfully participated in this program. Currently there are 261

companies participating in the PaYS program, including 39 Fortune 500 companies. This program fulfills the need of today's youth for civilian employment, while minimizing the resources required to execute the program. The Army must continue to coordinate with civilian business and technologies, in order to maintain healthy respectful competition. The Army must be more pro-active in order to maintain its relevance and capture potential recruits in the developing/emergent technologies arena.

A host of investments in Soldier and Family quality of life for the Army were recently briefed to Congress by Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston. Improvements included childcare and Youth Services programs among a laundry list of initiatives that SMA Preston briefed to the House Committee on Appropriations' subcommittee on military quality of life and veterans affairs. The above two service areas are consistently rated by Soldiers as important to their family's quality of life and heavily impact their decision to remain with the Army team, stated the SMA.²³ SMA Preston further pointed out that solid retention and recruiting efforts are essential to the Army as a "people-centric organization," and that "the Soldier remains the centerpiece of our formation."

Additional Army incentives include the recently updated Soldier-Family Action Plan that is supposed to address gaps in current programs. At the apex of the new program is the Army Family Covenant, which underscores the Army's commitment to support all members of the Army family in several areas at a 2008 cost of \$1.4 billion. The Army Family Covenant further demonstrates it's commitment to family readiness by funding Family Readiness support assistants, down to battalion level, to assist Family Readiness Groups.

Another significant issue, currently being addressed, is the transferability of Soldiers' MGIB benefits to family members. Currently there are several pilot programs for Soldiers to transfer MGIB benefits to spouses and the senior leadership is evaluating additional options to improve the benefits.

In July of 2007, the Army Reserves also created a new incentive, which is the Army Reserve Recruiting Assistance Program (ARRAP). ARRAP compensates reservists \$2,000 for each recruit they mentor through the enlistment process.²⁴ This program has tremendous potential, as long as funding is available. In fiscal year 2007, 218 recruits joined the Army Reserve, thanks to the ARRAP program, while so far in fiscal year 2008; the program has helped 663 recruits enlist. CSM Leon Caffie, senior non-commissioned officer for the U.S. Army Reserve and the U.S. Army Reserve Command, indicates huge expectations for the ARRAP, but believes additional incentives are required. These incentives include increasing the enlisted bonuses and educational benefits, along with reimbursement for travel expenditures, lodging, and meals during weekend training.

Army senior leadership continues to apply potentially innovative methods to draw interest and gain a commitment to serve in the military from Generation Yers. Some of the most recent programs and initiatives appear as if they will generate initial interest and achieve success, but will demand continuous modification to maintain interest in an evolving environment. A great example is the new "Active First" program that Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, recently announced. The Active First program allows new recruits to join the Army National Guard, and then fulfill an obligation with the Active Army before finishing their commitment back in the Army National Guard. The program,

initiated at the start of fiscal year 2008, has a goal of a mere 1,600 recruits. Although the concept is valid, it will only be successful, while bonus incentives are available, therefore the Army National Guard and Active Army must work together and continue to fund the program. To be successful with this generation we must involve the parents in the recruiting process knowing that a majority of young adults are looking towards their parents for confirmation on the choices they make.

Recruiting programs mutually support efforts the Army is making in order to maintain annual retention goals. The Army exceeded its 2007 retention program goals in the active component by 12 percent, 19 percent in the Army Reserve, and .4 percent in the Army National Guard. Retention rates for recently deployed units, or units currently deployed in the middle-east, remain exceptional at 110-120 percent of their yearly goals.²⁵

Numerous governmental agencies are seeking to understand today's youth. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducted an in-depth study on attracting young professionals. The study found that prevailing traits for the preferred employment eligible group include: eroding trust in government; changing views of patriotism and public service; idealism; individualism and autonomy in the workplace; work/life balance; competitiveness and high achieving; highly educated and technologically savvy; a need for feedback; and a dynamic environment in which to operate out of.²⁶ Most of these traits have been discussed previously, but we need to take a closer look at trust in the government and patriotism.

Generation Y is very similar to Generation X when it comes to distrust of the Federal government, a simple extension of their distrust for all large entities and

organizational power.²⁷ This distrust of the government was reinforced by the 9/11 attacks and the continued war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both instances measurably contribute to the decrease in government approval within this population. A related factor, of equal interest, is the Generation Y view of patriotism. The FEMA survey identified that young professionals no longer equate patriotism with a need to enter a public service career. Correspondingly, less than ten percent of students surveyed believed that an opportunity to serve their country should be a top reason for entering a government career.²⁸ Instantaneous access to media in a hyper-connected society also plays on today's youth with near time data that greatly influences day-to-day activities. Army senior leadership must understand what this generation is looking for in order to remain relevant and be competitive as a prospective career field for these very different young Americans.

So, how is the Army going to maintain its relevancy and stay competitive in a global economy that entices today's youth into the civilian market? The Goldwater-Nichols Act, signed in 1986, ushered in service improvements, focused on joint interoperability that created excellent opportunities for joint ventures to recruit today's youth into the military. Former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, had a vision to create a joint environment that would allow a possible kluging of service efforts to recruit. Mr. Rumsfeld wanted to eliminate the bureaucracy of borrowed military manpower to fill joint billets and obtain, from Congress, legislation compatible with the general concept of Goldwater-Nichols to: create joint doctrine and educational commands within the new profession and create a joint personnel command with authority to manage the careers of all members of the joint profession.²⁹ This general

concept could be the departure point for “retooling” the DOD recruiting bureaucracy and combining the separate service recruiting efforts in funding, manning, training, advertising, and command and control. Potential savings alone could satisfy some fiscal expectations for the transforming the Army institutional base, where efficiencies are clearly necessary to enable performance of Service Title 10 and executive agent functions that support Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN). Significant corollary benefits would be to divest non-essential functions, remove unnecessary layering and duplication, consolidate functions, resource in the most cost-effective manner, and privatize or outsource functions where applicable.

The annual cost for active duty personnel is increasing immensely. The Army must stop “pouring money” on purely reactive measures designed solely to achieve monthly and annual missions. Between the start of the Second Gulf War and the end of 2006, the Army alone increased the amount spent on retention bonuses by nearly an order of magnitude, i.e., from \$85 million to \$735 million.³⁰ Over the same time period, the services implemented very few, if any, proposals that involved retooling recruiting concepts, functions, or organizations. Recommendations included reduction of recruiting bureaucratic layers and consolidating recruiting organizations or functional areas (Can you say Joint Recruiting).

As stated in a 1994 GAO report, the services have consistently rejected any merging of recruiting across service lines. This resistance has persisted because they believe that, as the Comptroller of the Army stated in responding to one such proposal, “there are tremendous differences in recruiting for each of the Services, most of which are irreconcilable.”³¹ In 1990, the Defense Management Review proposed the concept

of merging the services' recruiting organizations into one command. Recruiting offices would remain service-unique and be staffed by individual service recruiters. DOD estimated that executing this proposal could result in savings of \$27 million in fiscal year 1993 and over \$240 million through fiscal year 1997.³² Although the services rejected combined service recruiting completely, they did pay "lip service" to the potential of consolidating some support functions. Another review was provided by the Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM), a congressionally mandated committee established in 1995 to reduce redundancies and military costs. One of the Commission's detailed proposals was to create a unified command focused on joint training and integration of all U.S. based forces.³³ Nothing significant, however, has been accomplished since either of the recommendations were developed.

If the armed forces cannot get to a joint recruiting environment then the senior leaders will need to review the current practices governing leaders in recruiting command. Currently, the Army does not have a formal process to identify and select recruiters who have potential for success in sales. Although those selected for recruiting are required to attend a seven week course, this course only provides rudimentary skills, knowledge, and techniques to succeed as a recruiter. The result of less than scientific selection and preparation of leaders is a huge variability in mission effectiveness. Personnel selection research suggests that marked recruiter performance gains are possible through the design of a more rigorous selection process.³⁴ Another potential process that should be legally reviewed and adjusted is the ability to reward recruiters for success. Incentives should be amended to include the possibility of providing financial rewards for successful recruiting. The Army cannot expect to get

outstanding results if it does not fully invest in the selection, training, and reward process for recruiting leaders.

The Army, as the largest service and with the greatest stake in the process, must take the lead and challenge the current recruiting dynamics. Adopted solutions must not only effectively recruit today, but have built-in adaptability in order to adjust to the future changes. It is a shame that the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff had to provide the latest opening for Army leadership to “think outside the box” and develop the joint recruiting initiative. Admiral Mullen, concluded during his CJCS Guidance for 2007-2008 by observing that, “We must push new boundaries, seek new opportunities and challenge existing assumptions. We must continue to change...We must prepare for an extremely challenging future – for what “comes after.”³⁵ Since the U.S. Department of Defense is the nation’s largest employer, it is paramount that it initiates efforts to work closely with civilian organizations to benefit all parties. As LTG Michael Rochelle, former Commander of Army Recruiting Command and now Army Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, stated that “this all-volunteer force is not inexpensive. We must compete to attract the best and brightest.”

“There is nothing so likely to produce peace as to be well prepared to meet an enemy.”³⁶ As the only current “superpower,” the United States must maintain a fully capable and professional military that can successfully defeat all potential enemies, both foreign and domestic. Numerous challenges face the Army in the 21st century. The most significant among them is to man the force with educated, dependable, and promising youth, while setting the groundwork for continuous recruitment into an unpredictable future. All of this must occur at a time in our history when America’s

youth, and the people with the most influence over them, have the least propensity to serve out nation via military service. The Army must learn from the past efforts in order to draw personnel into the armed services. There are long standing proposals on the table to improve recruiting processes and procedures. All or some of these proposals must be adopted to maintain relevance. Chief among them, however, is the notion of joint recruiting. It is now time to get past service parochialism, seize the initiative, and create the vehicle that will carry our armed forces into the future – joint recruiting.

Endnotes

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